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AUTHOR Miserandino, Anthony
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ABSTRACT

Several models for improving school effectiveness are now available, and most of them highlight the principal's leadership role. Unfortunately, administrators do not regularly reflect on the important aspects of their professional roles or analyze the factors that may make it difficult for them to implement given models of effectiveness in their particular settings. This paper proposes a model for self-appraisal by principals. Principals should first review the research literature on competing models of school effectiveness. Second, principals should select the effectiveness model that best meets their needs, then match their own abilities with those required of administrators by the model. Finally, principals should interact with the effectiveness model to discover their own strengths and weaknesses. Limitations on the self-appraisal model include (1) the difficulties in selecting criteria for judging effectiveness, (2) the confounding effects of experience and expertise, and (3) the implicit assumption that principals bring administrative knowledge to the process. An evaluation form to use in the self-appraisal process is included in the paper. Twenty-six references are cited. (PGD)

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# PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND SELF APPRAISAL OF EFFECTIVESS

Dr. Anthony Miserandino
Principal
Sacred Heart High School
Yonkers, New York 10703

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# Principal Leadership and Self-Appraisal of Effectiveness

The call to identify ways the principal can make schools more effective has become louder over recent years as reflected in the recent studies of schooling (Boyer, 1983; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Duston, & Smith, 1978). The operative assumption is that the leadership of the principal is critical to the healthy functioning of a school. By and large the research literature would support this assumption ( Alkin, Daillack, & White, 1979; Persell, Cookson & Lyon,1982; Purkey & Smith, 1982; Russell, White & Maurer,1985).

While the demand for such effectiveness is directed towards the principal, and the existence of models to evaluate effectiveness are available there is the need for a reflective and personal critique of factors which may make it difficult for an individual principal in a particular setting to implement a given model of effectivess.

This need for personal reflection is clearly felt when one approaches principals about their concerns. The excuses for the lack of such reflection, and the concurrent lack of self-appraisal are many: (Barth,1985; Schon, 1983).

Given the rush and competing demands, as well as the complexity of the institution ( Miles, 1986), administrators do not regularly reflect on what they consider to be the basic and vitally important aspects of their professional role.

Briefly, what I would propose for the model of self-appraisal in this paper is the following. First, administrators need to survey the

research literature to examine the many competing models of effectiveness which exist (Berman, 1984; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Louis, 1986; Miles, 1986; National Associationof Secondary School Principals, 1985; Persell, et.al.,1982; Russell, White, & Maurer, 1985; Rutherford, Hord, Huling & Hall, 1983). Next, they need to define their abilities against the model which seems to fit best the needs of the administrator. In what way does the model offer both direction and a critique of the administrator's abilties and talents? How can the model accommodate and take into account the school culture and supervisory responsibilities which the principal deems to be of highest priority?

Accounting for the model and its fit with the ethos of the school is critical. To overlook the school culture is to lose the opportunity for enhancement of the principal's effectiveness (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Jelinek, Smircich, & Hirsch, 1983; Sarason, 1971). Lastly, the person needs to "dialogue" with the model and discover strengths and weaknesses by allowing the model to reveal sources of each.

I have found that principals seldom have been afforded the dignity or the time to reflect on their principalship. Typically, the independence and self-confidence needed to engage in this self-directed reflection process is seldom encouraged by heavily bureaucratic systems that reward centralization and conformity rather than individualization and differentiation of principals needs--to say nothing of celebrating one's abilities! This is one of the valuable contributions of the Principal

Center at the School of Education at Harvard University (Levine, 1985).

The above process seeks to put the responsibility for enhancement

of a principal's effectiveness in the hands of the principal. Too often such professional development of the principal has been prescribed from the outside: teacher surveys, staff evaluation, superiors, the "university community".

A key assumption here is that the person serving as principal has the basic professional and personal skills and qualities which are prerequisite for the position of the head of a school. In addition, I am assuming that such a person has a firm and clearly articulated vision of what schools ought to be about. Building upon these qualities, it is my belief that self-motivated principals are open to self-analysis of their efforts and are willing to adjust accordingly. It is in this way that such principals provide the leadership so necessary to act as change agents/managers in the process of school improvement (Berman, 1984).

By demonstrating openness to self-reflection and personal reform principals set the stage for institutional openness and reform required to take advantage of the outside community's resources needed to implement significant change. Such modelling on the principal's part may impact in a positive fashion on the next level of critical administrators of change, department heads (Louis, 1986b).

Three Challenges to Self-Appraisal

With any method of evaluation there are likely to be limitations. Inherent in the model of self-appraisal being offered here are the following.

First, deciding upon the criterion to utilize in judging effectiveness is difficult. Given the variety of criteria, the contexts in which they are relevant, and the personal bias in selecting one versus another set of criteria it is little wonder that

the process of self-appraisal is often set aside. This limitation is greatly reduced when utilizing criteria which are generated by an expansive model built upon sound research. THe model borrowed from Leithwood and Montgomery (1985) has proven to be an excellent starting point.

Second, the confounding effects of experience and expertise. It would be easy to dismiss failure as a result of the lack of experience and attribute success to years of service. The effects of both variables need to be taken into account by the principal in the self-appraisal process.

Third, the model of self-appraisal assumes that the principal brings a body of administrative knowledge to the task. The difficulty here is in integrating the various strands of information into a coherent meta-theory to guide administrative behavior. By working with a model of self-appraisal, the assumption is that over time principals will more readily understand the "decision rules" they employ, and the personal and institutional characteristics operative which challenge the consistent application of such rules.

Principal Effectiveness: One Model

In my experience the most useful model for self-appraisal is based upon the work of Leithwood and Montgomery (1985). Their work builds upon previous work in the field, and has incorporated research findings based upon 200 principals across six school systems. Utilization of this model by principals for the purpose of in-service education has been useful: "while principals' specific reactions to the profile varies from accepting to skeptical, most have been stimulated to reexamine, weigh, and reflect on their work to an extent largely unpreceded in their experience."

Principal Behaviors and Self-appraisal

Based upon the research cited above the following set of questions are meant to elicit from the principal an evaluaiton and understanding of the factors which impact upon personal effectiveness.

A. Goal Setting Behaviors: place a check on the line indicating your relative position between choices:

1. School goals and the vision of education which guides your work are derived from:

   Public research_____|_____|_____|_____Administrative
   your school need for good
   needs analysis of order
   instruction

2. How much congruence exists between espoused school goals and the planning of their implementation and evaluation:

   great deal_____|_____|_____|_____nonexistent

3. How often are goals reviewed and communicated to school constituency (students, teachers, parents, local community):

   regular/systematic_____|_____|_____|_____only when
   procedures in place required

   Give an example of the goal selection process utilized during the past year. Be specific in describing the selection, implementation and evaluation of the effects of the goal on the school program. What, if anything, would you do different next time you are faced with a similar administrative responsibility?

B. Instructional/Program Activities:

1. Instructional objectives are clearly stated, based upon student ability levels, and integrate teacher input:

Clearly stated_____|_____|_____|_____vague

based upon student_____|_____|_____|_____imposed from

need/ability outside

integrate teacher_____|_____|_____|_____administrative

input directive

Systematically_____|_____|_____|_____no clear procedures

implemented/evaluated for monitoring

2. Time in the school setting is used so as to focus student and teacher attention to instructional objectives:

high priority to_____|_____|_____|_____outside events

teaching time disrupt order

3. Curriculum development seeks to integrate instructional objectives:

regular/_____|_____|_____|_____rarely attended

systematic to by leaders

4. Long-term goals in instructional/curriculum development are broken down into smaller, manageable objectives and timetable:

regular/_____|_____|_____|_____unmanageable/

systematic timeless

5. Special characteristics of the school are recognized and integrated into instructional/curriculum development:

fully developed_____|_____|_____|_____intuitive/

needs assesment unexamined

6. Expectations about student achievement and instructional objectives are derived from:

research/_____|_____|_____|_____personal

professional judgements experience

C. Strategies for Enhancing Program Development: this section seeks to review the procedures you use to intervene or assist in realizing school goals.

1. Which of the following strategies do you employ:

_____building of interpersonal relationships among staff

_____provision of staff with knowledge and skills

_____enhanced within-school communication procedures

_____allowance for nonteaching time for staff

_____establishment of procedures to handle routine matters

_____direct relationship with students

2. Select an important goal you worked on for the year and describe the strategies utilized in its realization.

Which didn't you use, but in hindsight, should have employed?

What accounted for your failure to include these at the time you were making decisions?

Which of the following considerations were over-looked in your selection of strategy/goal match:

_____the nature of the goal to be achieved

_____the school processes to be influenced

_____characteristics of the people involved

_____competing activities going on in the school

_____school norms (both past and present)

_____past administrative experience

_____the nature of the difficulties seeking to be addressed

3. Of the strategies listed above, which are ones you seldom utilize during the year? What are the personal and institutional reasons for their lack of use?

What adjustments (personal and/or institutional

can you make to behave differently in the future?

D. Decision-making Procedures:

1. Effective principals demonstrate use of a wide range of different forms of decision making. Which of the following forms describe procedures utilized by you:

_____unilateral decisions

_____delegated responsibility

_____consensus building

_____majority vote

Describe the factors which differentiate your use of each of the above procedures. Are you especially resistant to any one procedure?

What do you think accounts for this hesitation? Are your decisions viewed as fair, consistent, and clearly communicated?

2. Give three examples of the way in which you monitor the decision making procedures which characterize your administartive style.

3. Which of the following sources of information do you employ in making decisions:

_____policies of local school board

_____responses of faculty on issue to be addressed

_____informal/formal class visits

_____research literature on issue to be addressed

_____analyses of standardized test results, report cards

_____formal assessment of student needs

_____school handbook of procedures/routines

_____other:

What patterns emerge in monitoring decision making procedures and sources of information? What accounts for failing to use as many

resources as possible in your making of decisions? If such a failure does exist, what steps can you take to increase your use of resources in the future? How communicate this change in your stance to other school personnel?

E. Action Plan Development

There were four areas reviewed in the self-appraisal process. Which one of these areas proved to be the most demanding of you skills and abilities. What are the steps you need to take in order to addresses weaknesses you perceived as your reviewed your behavior in this area. Be specific, concrete, and realistic in setting your objectives for improvement. What criteria will you use to monitor and judge your success in self improvement?

Is there some reason blocking your use of other administrative personnel to assist you in this process of self-improvement. Research clearly indicates that support from others is essential if you are to increase your effectiveness as a principal. Has your plan for improvement taken into account all the factors necessary to insure modest success over time.

Conclusion

Recently an educational writer (Louis,1986b) predicted that less than half of all programs for increasing school effectiveness would succeed because they were so dependent upon outside, centrally located authorities. By way of contrast, there is strong evidence that change orchestrated at the school level has a significant chance of making a difference (Berman, 1978; Crandall, Eiseman & Louis, 1986). The principal is the key player in this change process.

It would be my hope that engaging in a process of self-appraisal of one's own personalized model for effectiveness, not context-specific

as possible, would enahance the odds in favor of efforts for increasing student achievement by enhancing the effectiveness of schools and the principals who guide them.

Educational reform is hard work; there is no magical handbook available. One of the critical elements for enhancing the work of schools is the personal and professional growth evidenced by the school principal. The process of self-appraisal offered here is one step in the direction of effective schooling.

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